

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

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E.O .11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, XS

SUBJECT: EGYPT AND JORDAN PITCH KNUCKLEBALL TO FEDAYEEN

REFS: A. CAIRO 5370; B. AMMAN 4209; C. AMMAN 4203; D. AMMAN 4211;

E. ALGIERS 1578

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SUMMARY: JULY 17 EGYPTIAN-JORDAINIAN COMMUNIQUE APPEARS TO

HAVE DISCOMBOBULATED FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT MORE THAN ANY OTHER AREA DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT MEMORY. 'ARAFAT AND FEDAYEEN "MODERATES" WILL HAVE HARD TIME IN TRYING TO DIVERT WRATH ON PART OF THEIR FOLLOWERS AGAINST EGYPTIANS FOR THIS "BETRAYAL", EVEN THOUGH THEY CAN BE EXPECTED TO GO TO CONSIDERABLE (AND TORTUOUS) LENGTHS TO DO SO. IN OUR VIEW, 'ARAFAT'S ABILITY TO PRESERVE HIS OPTIONS VIS-A-VIS ME SETTLEMENT EFFORT HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT REDUCED, AND IT MAY ERODE EVEN FURTHER IN IMMEDIATE FUTURES. END SUMMARY.

1. JOINT EGYPTIAN-JORDANIAN COMMUNIQUE RECOGNIZING PLO AS "LEGITIMATE REP OF PALESTINIANS WITH EXCEPTION PALESTINIANS LIVING IN HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN" HAS NATURALLY CAUSED FUROR AMONG PALESTINIAN CIRCLES HERE. COMMUNIQUE OBVIOUSLY IS OF SUCH CENTRAL IMPORTANCE TO FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT THAT ITS LEADERSHIP COULD NOT BE EXPECTED GREET IT WITH SILENCE, EVEN THOUGH PLO/FATAH "MODERATES" APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN STUNNED BY IT INITIALLY. EVEN SO, THERE APPEARS TO BE MORE THAN HABITUAL DISARRAY IN FEDAYEEN RANKS ON PRECISELY HOW TO DEAL WITH MATTER, WITH SPOKESMAN FOR VARIOUS GROUPS TAKING THEIR CUTS AT THE EGYPTIAN-JORDANIAN PITCH-ALL OF THEM SWINGING LATE AND RATHER BLINDLY.

2. REACTION OF COURSE SIMPLEST FOR FEDAYEEN "REJECTIONISTS", WHO ONLY NEED REPLAY THEIR PRE-RECORDED DENUNCIATIONS OF IMPERIALIST "PLOTS" AND ARAB "REACTIONAIRES" (NOT FORGETTING TO ADD NOTES OF "WE TOLD YOU SO" FOR BENEFIT OF "MODERATES"). PFLP AND OTHER DIE-HARDS WERE THUS ABLE TO SET INITIAL TONE FOR WHAT HAS BEEN UNIVER-SALLY NEGATIVE FEDAYEEN REACTION RE ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE. PLO "MODERATES", OBVIOUSLY TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND NOT A LITTLE UPSET OVER HAVING BEEN "DECEIVED" BY 'ARAFAT'S ERSTWHILE EGYPTIAN FRIENDS, HAVE JOINED CHORUS OF DENUNCIATION, BUT THEIR RESPONSES SUGGEST THAT THEY ARE HAVING CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY COMING TO GRIPS WITH NEW SITUATION.

3. FATAH, FOR EXAMPLE, FINALLY ANNOUNCED ITS REJECTION ON JULY 19, EXPLAINING THAT ALEXANDRIA FORMULA REPRESENTED RETREAT FROM DECISION OF ALGIERS SUMMIT RECOGNIZING PLO AS "SOLE REP" OF PALESTINIANS, WOULD RESULT IN DIVIDING PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, AND BE TANTAMOUNT TO ACCEPTANCE OF KING HUSSEIN'S UNITED ARAB KINGDOM PLAN. FATAH FURTHER COMDEMNED CONCEPT OF ISRAELI-JORDANIAN DISENGAGEMENT OF GROUNDS IT WOULD RESULT IN RETURN OF JORDANIAN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

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TO EVACUATED PORTIONS OF WEST BANK. (ON LATTER ISSUE, FAROUQ QADDOUMI WENT SO FAR AS TO CHALLENGE VALIDITY OF EGYPTIAN FONMIN FAHMI'S EXPLANATIONS OF WHAT COMMUNIQUE MEANT IN TERMS

OF WEST BANK.) SA'IQAJS ZOHAYR MUHSEN, FOR HIS PART, GENERALLY ECHOED FATAH'S STAND.

4. PLO EX COMM, MEETING IN ABSENCE OF 'ARAFAT, BLITHELY SIDE-

STEPPED BILATERAL NATURE OF EGYPTIAN-JORDANIAN COMMUNIQUE IN PROCLAIMING ITS REJECTION ON JULY 21. PLO/EC CONTENTED ITSELF WITH ENUNCIATING PLO PRINCIPLES WHICH, BY IMPLICATION, ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE HAD VIOLATED: I.E., "PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IS INDIVISIBLE;" REPRESENTATION OF PART OF PALESTINIANS BY ANY ARAB COUNTRY OPENS THE DOOR FOR "LIQUIDATION AND RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES;" PLO IS SOLE LEGITIMATE REP OF PALESTINIANS WHEREEVER THEY MAY BE LOCATED", ETC. THIS OBLIQUE APPROACH BY FEDAYEEN "MODERATES" CAN BE VIEWED AS INDICATIVE OF THEIR GROWING DIFFICULTY IN TRYING TO MAINTAIN THEIR "REVOLUTIONARY" CREDENTIALS WITHOUT GIVING UP OPTION OF ASSOCIATING THEMSELVES WITH SETTLEMENT EFFORT, OR IN ATTEMPTING TO AVOID LEAVING FIELD TO KING HUSSEIN WITHOUT RENDERING THEMSELVES VULNERABLE TO CHARGES OF "BETRAYAL" BY FEDAYEEN DIE-HARDS.

5. COMMENT: ALEXANDRIA FORMULA CLEARLY COMES NOWHERE NEAR MEETING DEMANDS WHICH PLO HAS STEADFASTLY TRUMPETED AS NECESSARY FOR ANY RECONCILIATION WITH AMMAN. YET INsofar AS EGYPTIAN-JORDANIAN COMMUNIQUE REQUESTS MOVEMENT OR EVEN APPEARANCE OF MOVEMENT ON PART OF GOJ WITH CAIRO'S APPARENT APPROVAL, IT CANNOT BE SIMPLY DISMISSED OR IGNORED BY 'ARAFAT AND CO. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE SUBMIT FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS RE POSITION OF PLO/FATAH "MODERATES":

(A) HUSSEIN AND SADAT HAVE NOW PUT THE BALL FIRMLY IN FEDAYEEN COURT--WHICH IS PRECISELY WHERE PLO LEADERSHIP DOES NOT WANT IT. THOUGH LOCAL PRO-FEDAYEEN AL MUHARRIR WRITES JULY 22 THAT COMMUNIQUE HAS PROMOTED FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT TO "CLOSE ALL DOORS" TO RECONCILIATION WITH JORDAN AND TO WITHDRAW ITS "CONDITIONAL AGREEMENT" TO ATTENDED GENEVA TALKS, WE QUESTION WHETHER "MODERATES" ARE PREPARED AS YET TO FORCLOSE ALL OPTIONS AND BURN THEIR BRIDGES WITH EGYPT, SYRIA, SAUDIS, ETC. TO DO SO COULD PROMPT EGYPTIANS AND OTHERS TO CONCLUDE THAT FEDAYEEN IN TOTAL ARE MERE OBSTACLES AND TO LEAVE 'ARAFAT AND CO. STRANDED AT THE ALTAR WHEN

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EVERYONE ELSE PACKS OFF TO GENEVA.

(B) PLO LEADERSHIP ALSO MUST BE AWARE OF IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AND OTHER ARAB STATES ANXIOUS FOR FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARDS NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THIS AWARENESS CLEARLY MANIFESTED IN ALMOST SURGICAL PRECISION WITH WHICH FATAH, SA'QA AND PLO/EC STATEMENTS HAVE SO FAR TRIED TO DISSECT ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE WITHOUT ONCE MENTIONING EGYPTIAN ROLE IN ITS FORMULATION. WE GET CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT PLO/FATAH LEADERSHIP, DESPITE THEIR DISAGREEMENT WITH FAYMUN FAHMI'S "CLARIFICATION", WILL CONTINUE BE CAREFUL NOT TO OFFEND SADAT NEEDLESSLY. INDEED, THERE IS ALREADY MUCH SPECULATION HERE RE EFFORTS BY FEDAYEEN "MODERATES", THOUGH INTERMEDIARIES SUCH AS LEBANON, TO REPAIR ANY DAMAGE TO EGYPTIAN-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS--EVEN THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT 'ARAFAT WILL CANCEL PROJECTED VISIT

TO EGYPT FOR CONSULATIONS WITH SADAT.

(C) ADDING PERHAPS TO PLO APPREHENSIONS HAS BEEN SYRIAN SILENCE RE EGYPTIAN-JORDANIAN COMMUNIQUE. COULD BE DAWNING UPON SOME FEDAYEEN LEADERS THAT, DESPITE FEDAYEEN ABILITY TO CAUSE TROUBLE FOR ARAB REGIMES, LATTER HAVE BEGUN TO PLACE LIMITS ON EXTENT TO WHICH THEY ARE PREPARED SACRIFICE THEIR NATIONAL INTERESTS TO HUMOR PALESTINIANS.

(D) 'ARAFAT HIMSELF HAS MANAGED, AND APPARENTLY ON PURPOSE, TO AVOID BECOMING PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN FEDAYEEN REACTION S OUTLINED ABOVE. THERE STILL NO EXPLANATIONS YET OF WHY HE FAILED TO CUT SHORT,

AS ANTICIPATED, HIS NORTH AFRICAN TOUR TO RETURN TO PARTICIPATE IN FATAH/PLO DELIBERATIONS ON COMMUNIQUE. LIKEWISE, HIS RECENT REFUSAL (REF E) TO BE DRAWN INTO PUBLIC COMMENT RE HUSSEIN/SADAT TALKS SUGGESTS HE WISHES AVOID NEED TO MAKE QUICK RESPONSE. ON OTHER HAND, IN VIEW OF HIS PAST ROLE OF EXPLAINING AND LEADING SUPPORT IN PLO FOR EGYPTIAN POLICY, WE FIND IT NOTEWORTHY THAT HE SHOWS NO INCLINATION TO ASSUME THIS FUNCTION AT PRESENT. IF RUMORS OF POST-PONEMENT OR CANCELLATION OF HIS PROJECTED TRIP TO EGYPT PROVE CORRECT,

WOULD ALMOST APPEAR THAT 'ARAFAT DOES NOT WISH FOR PRESENT TO BE SADDLED WITH HAVING TO INTERPRET OR EXPLAIN CAIRO'S THINKING TO HIS FOLLOWERS. HE IS PROBABLY SEEKING TO BUY TIME, BUT ON THIS OCCASION THERE WOULD SEEM TO BE DEFINITE LIMITED ON AMOUNT OF RUNNING ROOM
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HE CAN PURCHASE. HE MUST, SOONER OR LATER, EITHER JOIN "REJECTIONIST" TREND OR SEEK TO STEM IT WITH REAL OR APPARENT ACHIEVEMENTS AIMED AT REASSERTING FEDAYEEN INFLUENCE WITH MODERATE ARAB GOVTS., ESPECIALLY EGYPT AND SYRIA. GODLEY

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